

# **A Historical Argument for a Force in Readiness**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

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The United States Marine Corps' most recent operating concept, 2010, directs the organization toward preparing for what it believes to be the most likely future conflict. The Corps has decided to focus on irregular wars as a priority for preparing for combat. This focus diverges from previous Marine Corps concepts because the organization has previously strived to remain a balanced general purpose force in readiness. This argument is important because it challenges the idea that deviating from what has proved successful to the Corps for the past one hundred years will balance the Corps, but conversely imbalance the force. This monograph used a historical comparison of the Marine Corps' and U.S. Army's preparation for war from 1912 to 2012 and concluded that throughout this period the Marine Corps' stance as a general purpose force in readiness has proven its worth to the Republic. This conclusion is evidenced by the Corps' preparation through three distinct periods: 1912-1945, 1946-1991, and 1992-2012.

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## Introduction

The non-state organization Hezbollah attacked the militarily superior Israel on July 12, 2006. Specifically, Hezbollah ambushed a small contingent of Israeli soldiers, resulting in two Israeli infantrymen captured and six killed or wounded.<sup>1</sup> This event led to Israeli retaliation against Hezbollah forces. A brief relative combat power analysis of the two belligerents indicated that Israel should have easily defeated Hezbollah fighters in a high skill combined arms conflict, but throughout the summer of 2006 Hezbollah proved to be an unexpectedly worthy adversary in southern Lebanon. Some would argue that the difficulty the Israeli defense force faced in this recent conflict resulted from incorrectly preparing for a conflict or adversary. Previously, Arab ground forces had not demonstrated a propensity to stand and fight against Israeli armed forces, leading some Israeli officers to believe that “Arab soldiers and officers are simply cowards who break and run at the first sign of danger.”<sup>2</sup> Except for Egypt’s performance in 1973 on the Sinai Peninsula, this assessment accurately characterized Israel’s experiences with Arab ground forces prior to 2006.<sup>3</sup> While Israel was able to recover from this embarrassing situation, the lack of decisive victory brought to light the potential implications of a nation or organization that incorrectly prepares for a conflict.

The renowned British historian, Michael Howard, explained the dangers incurred when a military institution prepares to fight the next war by focusing on the previous war:

Like the statesman, the soldier has to steer between the danger of repeating the errors of the past because he is ignorant that they have been made, and the danger

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<sup>1</sup> Russell W. Glenn, *All Glory is Fleeting: Insights from the Second Lebanon War* (Prepared for the United States Joint Forces Command by Rand, National Defense Research Institute, February, 2008), iii.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 108-114.

of remaining bound by theories deduced from past history although changes in conditions have rendered these theories obsolete.<sup>4</sup> He further cited specific historical examples of what could potentially happen to a nation if it incorrectly prepared for a future conflict. He argued that the British made mistakes against Rommel in 1941-1942 similar to those the Austrians made against Bonaparte in 1796-1797. He strengthened his stance further by describing France's failures as a result of "studying the lessons of 'the last time'; and committing appalling strategic and tactical blunders in consequence" in 1914 and 1939.<sup>5</sup> Howard's simple argument is most often ignored.

The United States (U.S.) is in danger of ignoring Howard's warning and appears to be preparing for the next war by concentrating on its most recent engagement. Since terrorists attacked the U.S. in September 2001, the nation has been engaged in an irregular war, only interrupted by a brief high skill combined arms conflict with Iraq's armed forces in the spring of 2003. Irregular warfare, a very specific type of struggle, has monopolized the U.S. military for the last decade and narrowly focused the U.S. armed forces.<sup>6</sup> This specific type of combat improved the U.S. military's capability in a certain aspect of warfare because of the countless lessons the armed forces learned. Irregular warfare, similar to small wars or counterinsurgencies, is only one of several forms of struggle on what is known as the spectrum of conflict.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars: And Other Essays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 195. Hereafter referenced as Howard, *The Causes of Wars: And Other Essays*.

<sup>5</sup> Howard, *The Causes of Wars*, 195.

<sup>6</sup> United State Department of Defense, *JP 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), 177. Hereafter referenced as *JP 1-02*. Joint doctrine defines irregular warfare as a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will.

<sup>7</sup> Headquarters United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 1-1. Hereafter referenced as *Small Wars Manual*, 1940. Marine Corps doctrine defines "Small Wars" as operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation. Headquarters United States Marine Corps, *MCDP 1: Warfighting* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 26. Marine Corps doctrine explains the spectrum

During this past decade of contested military operations, the U.S. published updated versions of the *National Security Strategy*, *National Defense Strategy*, and *National Military Strategy*. These documents articulate the plan for ensuring the nation's security. All of these strategy documents describe the environment in which the military operates. From this the military can decide the details with which it will accomplish the vision detailed in the strategic documents. The *National Security Strategy* recognizes that even though the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan highlight the nation's strategic concern they "are only one element of our strategic environment and cannot define America's engagement with the world," alluding to the dangers of over focusing on a specific type of conflict.<sup>8</sup> The next document in the strategic hierarchy describes an unpredictable environment that warns of the dangers with both non-state and traditional nation state adversaries.<sup>9</sup> The environment described in the strategic documents is not exactly the environment that the U.S. Marine Corps is focusing on.

This past decade of fighting brings attention back to the U.S. Marine Corps' historical involvement in irregular or small wars. Ignoring the Marine Corps' historical involvement in all the other conflicts that span the entire spectrum, the organization's leadership uses historical evidence, among other considerations, and the current global situation as a reason to predict future conflicts as irregular instead of high skill combined arms warfighting. The U.S. Marine Corps states in its Operating Concepts released in 2010 that "though the Marine Corps will remain a multi-purpose force, its focus will shift more toward what Rudyard Kipling called 'the

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of conflict as a spectrum , with actions referred to as military operations other than war in which the application of military power is usually restrained and selective at one end...at the other end of the spectrum is general war, a large-scale, sustained combat operation such as global conflict between major powers. United States Army, *FM 3-0 C1: Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011), 2-1. Hereafter referenced as *FM 3-0 C1*. Army doctrine describes the spectrum of conflict in which the left hand of the spectrum is stable peace, characterized as an operational environment characterized by the absence of militarily significant violence. On the right hand of the spectrum, general war describes an environment dominated by interstate and intrastate violence.

<sup>8</sup> *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: 2010), 8.

<sup>9</sup> *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: 2008), 2-5.



savage wars of peace.””<sup>10</sup> This statement demonstrates that the organization recognizes the need to be capable of conducting more than small wars, but a shift to a focused type of warfare will define the organization’s effort for the near future. In addition to this operating concept, the Marine Corps Commandant, General James Amos, issued his guidance to the Marine Corps further stressing this shift in the organization’s paradigm.

In this guidance, General Amos reiterates those characteristics that distinguish the Marine Corps as a fighting force that is capable of being the first to fight by operating across the spectrum of conflict with little notice.<sup>11</sup> His description of the Corps’ role is the same his predecessors envisioned, but his guidance diverges from previous commandants. General Amos states four priorities in his planning guidance, none of which speak to providing a flexible force capable of operations closer to the major combat operations end of the spectrum of conflict. Instead, the Commandant reinforces the notion that the Marine Corps is primarily a crisis response and power projection force and not focused on major combat operations as explained in the Marine Corps’ force structure review.<sup>12</sup> The Corps believes the need for irregular warfare capable forces will only increase in the near future, and therefore believes it needs to increase special operations capable forces and advisory groups.<sup>13</sup>

The impending reduction in forces that the Marine Corps faces is the same for the other branches of the armed forces. To accomplish the priorities stated in the planning guidance, the Marine Corps submitted a proposed force structure to the nation’s civilian leadership. In that

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<sup>10</sup> G3/G5 Division Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Marine Corps Operating Concepts: Third Edition* (Quantico, Virginia: June, 2010), 129. Hereafter referenced as *Marine Corps Operating Concepts 2010*.

<sup>11</sup> General James Amos, *35th Commandant Of The Marine Corps Commandant’s Planning Guidance* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2010), 5. Hereafter cited as *Commandant’s Planning Guidance 2010*.

<sup>12</sup> Marine Corps Force Structure Review Group, “Reshaping America’s Expeditionary Force in Readiness” (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2010), 2. Hereafter cited as *Marine Corps Force Structure Review*.

<sup>13</sup> *Commandant’s Planning Guidance 2010*, 8-9.

proposal, the Marine Corps recommended reducing the operating force by three infantry battalions, two artillery battalions, and nine flying squadrons; while at the same time either preserving or increasing special operations forces and irregular warfare capabilities.<sup>14</sup> In the same proposal the Marine Corps indicated that it is willing to accept risks in certain areas of the spectrum of conflict because the proposed reduction deemphasizes high skill combined arms organizations. The Marines Corps' stated willingness to accept risk in "major combat operations" potentially leaves the Marines institutionally unprepared to participate in combat with an adversary in a high skill combined arms conflict.<sup>15</sup> In an effort to expand the term to include other forms of conflict, this monograph will refer to high skill combined arms warfare to describe types of conflict other than small wars, irregular warfare, counterinsurgencies, or stability operations.<sup>16</sup>

In an attempt to remain balanced and relevant, the Marine Corps' stated priorities will set in motion a series of events that will potentially leave the Corps unbalanced and irrelevant in a future conventional conflict. A combined arms force, capable of operating and winning across the spectrum of warfighting, one that characterized the Marine Corps throughout the twentieth century, is now incompatible with predictions for future conflicts. Capitalizing and concentrating instead on the last decade of lessons learned, the U.S. Marine Corps might be making the mistake of predicting the next war by preparing to fight the last war. The organizational changes the

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<sup>14</sup> Marine Corps Force Structure Review, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 4; United States Army, *FM 3-0 C1*, 2-12. Army doctrine explains major combat operations as those operations characterized by extreme violence which employ all available combat power to destroy an enemy's military capability, thereby decisively altering the military conditions within the operational environment.

<sup>16</sup> United State Department of Defense, *JP 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 179. Joint doctrine defines counterinsurgency as the comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. Stability operations as an overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.

Marine Corps must make to allow the organization's vision to become a reality will leave the nation without a flexible, immediately deployable, expeditionary force capable of engaging in any form or method of warfighting, whether irregular or high skill combined arms.

The difficulty a military organization experiences when preparing for an unknown future conflict is not new as evidenced by recent literature in military professional journals and academic environments. Several bodies of work expand on arguments relating to preparing for the next conflict and prioritizing limited resources within the armed forces. Most articles and academic works argue for a military focused in one of two areas; both small and irregular wars, or complex combined arms fighting. If military organizations did not have to make priority decisions on personnel, time, and resources the debate would not exist. The fact remains, as it always has, that the military must operate in a personnel and budgetary constrained environment. The majority of recent research makes one of three arguments with respect to the direction ground forces must take with respect to institutional missions: focus on irregular or small wars, focus on major combat operations, or focus on the irregular conflict currently labeled as hybrid wars. Hybrid wars describe a conflict against a non-state actor who possesses technology usually reserved for national militaries.<sup>17</sup>

The first argument parallels the current Marine Corps stance, as demonstrated in recently published articles in the Corps' professional journal, *Marine Corps Gazette*. In 2010, the Marine Corps Gazette, published Captain Shawn Miller's article, "An Old New Role for the Marine Corps." This article refers to the common belief that the Marine Corps has primarily been

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<sup>17</sup> Lieutenant General James N. Mattis, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel Frank Hoffman, USMCR (Ret.) "Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars," *Proceedings Magazine* (November 2005), <http://milnewstbay.pbworks.com/f/MattisFourBlockWarUSNINov2005.pdf>. (accessed December, 2011). This article describes hybrid warfare in detail as one in which military forces have to deal with the fall out of a failed state that owned but lost control of some biological agents or missiles, while combating ethnically motivated paramilitary force, and a set of radical terrorists who have now been displaced. We may face remnants of the fielded army of a rogue state...and they may employ conventional weapons in very novel or nontraditional ways.

involved in small or irregular wars. Captain Miller argues correctly for the need to support the Department of Defense's priorities, especially in light of "the shrinking defense budgets," but prioritizes the future role of the Marine Corps primarily to irregular wars in order to remain a relevant force in future conflicts.<sup>18</sup> This article, and those like it, provides support to the Marine Commandant's vision for the Corps.

The second popular argument centers on a single form of conflict, similar to the argument that focuses solely on small and irregular wars. Lieutenant Colonel William E. Benson, a U.S. Army officer with extensive counterinsurgency experience, explains in his academic work that the U.S. Army face the problem of prioritizing between major combat operations and stability operations as a focus for the U.S. Army.<sup>19</sup> He further argues that because of possible existential threats to the nation, the U.S. Army should prioritize its limited resources on developing major combat operation skills instead of developing skills best suited for stability operations.<sup>20</sup> He cites Iran, North Korea, Hezbollah, and the Chechen rebels as examples of existential threats and reasons why the U.S. Army must prioritize preparing for major combat operations over stability operations.<sup>21</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Benson's stance supports this monograph's argument, even though he only refers to the U.S. Army.

The third major argument made with the overall theme of preparing for war is the need to recognize the new concept of the hybrid war. Evolving from the belief that traditional conflicts between established nation states is unlikely; the hybrid war combines the lethal technological aspects of a conventional war with an irregular adversary. Lieutenant Colonel F. G. Hoffman

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<sup>18</sup> Captain Shawn A. Miller, "An Old New Role for the Marine Corps," *Marine Corps Gazette* (August 2010): 44.

<sup>19</sup> LTC William E. Benson, "Major Combat Operations versus Stability Operations: Getting Army Priorities Correct" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2010-2011), 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

argues in his *Marine Corps Gazette* article, “Preparing for Hybrid Wars,” that the armed forces, and especially the Marine Corps, need to prepare for a combination of state centric and irregular warfare.<sup>22</sup> This popular argument has recently gained traction because of Israel’s failure when facing the hybrid adversary Hezbollah in 2006. This recent example cautions political and military professionals alike about the risk of incorrectly preparing for war.

In addition to recent journal and academic works that present three prevalent arguments with respect to U.S. ground forces preparing for the next aggressive confrontation this monograph uses other works to provide historical facts and perspectives through the past century. The memoirs of former Marine Commandants General John A. Lejeune and A. A. Vandegrift detail the actions of the Corps’ senior leadership at a time when the role and existence of the Marine Corps were at risk. Both former Commandants led the Marines during a period in which the Corps’ role, responsibilities, and missions were in question. These two leaders’ vision differed from the current Commandant’s vision because they did not focus the Corps in a specific aspect of combat. Instead, both Generals Lejeune and Vandegrift stress in their memoirs the value of the Marine Corps stems from its characteristic as a general purpose fighting organizations. Generals Lejeune and Vandegrift’s guidance lends support to this monograph’s argument.

This monograph also uses general military historical works as secondary sources. These pieces of knowledge provide the historical facts that which support this paper’s argument. The Marine Corps history details the military operations the service experienced while attempting to remain a balanced general purpose organization. Likewise, the Army history details that organization’s evolving preparation for combat. The history demonstrates that both organizations sought relevance while preparing for combat and that the Marine Corps found relevance by remaining a balanced military organization.

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<sup>22</sup> Lieutenant Colonel F.G. Hoffman, “Preparing for Hybrid Wars,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (March 2007): 61.

Finally, this body of work uses doctrinal manuals and period specific professional journal articles that reveal professional debate in the face of organizational change and the doctrine that resulted from that change. Most Marine Corps doctrine and early published professional journal articles avoid focusing in a specific type of conflict as evidenced by the near simultaneous publication of the *Small Wars Manual* and the *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*. The importance of a balanced force is evident in the *Small Wars Manual* because it stresses “training for small wars missions is carried on simultaneously with training for naval operations and major warfare on land.”<sup>23</sup> Conversely, Army doctrine has had a tendency to focus the organization. This focus has mostly been in major combat operations as evidenced through the various versions of *FM 100-5*. This fundamental difference supports this paper’s argument because the Marine Corps has always remained a balanced force in order to justify its existence while the Army’s existence was never in jeopardy.

What then, will the Marine Corps’ institutional focus on irregular or small wars mean to the nation and the Marine Corps if in the future it is faced with a traditional conventional adversary? The focus here is on the Marine Corps’ role in fighting the nation’s battles. This runs counter to the popular argument that the Corps should concentrate mostly on irregular war as envisioned by the Commandant, and only on high skill combined arms warfighting as a secondary role. This monograph argues that the 2010 U.S. Marine Corps Operating Concept will lead to a future organization manned, equipped, and trained to fight irregular warfare in the manner of the past decade, diminishing both its overall utility as the nation’s force in readiness, and also bringing into question the rationale for the continued existence of the U.S. Marine Corps as a separate warfighting institution of the Republic.

The majority of the argument for this work will be a chronological and comparative analysis of the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Army through three periods. The popular idea that the

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<sup>23</sup> *Small Wars Manual*, 1940, 4-1.

U.S. Army is tasked with high skill combined arms warfighting, and that the Marine Corps is tasked with small wars is not supported by historical examples. Throughout its history, the U.S. Marine Corps has faced significant attacks to its organizational existence, including the periods covered here. One way that the Marine Corps has survived each of these attacks is to prove that it is the nation's first choice for any mission, high skill combined arms conflict included. It is truly a force in readiness. This work will use selected memoirs of both U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Army officers to particularly highlight the direction each service's leadership desired through the specific periods. Professional journal articles throughout the periods examined will be used to demonstrate that the question this paper attempts to answer is not new, and that the Marine Corps specifically recognizes that it must be capable of succeeding in all forms of combat to justify its existence. In the final period that this work covers, an example of a nation's failure to prepare for the full spectrum of conflict will further explain the dangers of attempting to predict and focus on a particular form of future conflict.

This work is organized into four major sections. Section I includes the years 1912 to 1945. This section compares the organizational experience of both the Marine Corps and the Army in a period highlighted by the First World War, followed by a period of significant downsizing, and then the Second World War. Section II covers 1946 to 1991 and relates to the Marine Corps as it fights for its existence and the Army attempts to solidify its roles and missions. Both are attempting to remain relevant in an atomic age with the reality that total war is not the only option the nation faces when employing its ground forces across the spectrum of conflict. Section III comprises the years 1992 to 2012 and explains how the Marine Corps and Army demonstrated overwhelming success in both high skill combined arms warfighting and small wars, only to face significant reductions in their force structure. As both services were reduced, they experienced a series of small wars, which built up to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and then transitioned into a prolonged limited conflict. This prolonged conflict fueled the idea of the need for forces focused on small wars for future conflicts. This historical comparison

concludes with an explanation of the dangers of focusing on a single form of conflict and a brief recommendation for the Marine Corps' future focus.

## **Section I: Wars Small and Large - 1912 to 1945**

During the period encompassing the years prior to the First World War through the Second World War, the Marine Corps strived to find a distinct role within the armed forces. During this period, the Marines were involved in protecting U.S. interests in the Caribbean, Mexico, Europe, and the Pacific. The Marine Corps continued to improve its reputation as a flexible force capable of succeeding in all types of conflicts, including both small and large wars.

During this initial period, the nation ordered Marines to conduct expeditions throughout the Caribbean. The Corps "made three major interventions: Nicaragua (1912-1913 and 1926-1933); Haiti (1915-1934); and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924)."<sup>24</sup> These expeditions could hardly be considered short duration commitments. U.S. policy in the region during the 1930s had four objectives:

(1) to control the sea-lanes between the United States and the Panama Canal; (2) to keep other foreign powers –especially the newly muscular Germany–out of the Caribbean; (3) to support American investors in these underdeveloped agricultural countries–what came to be called 'Dollar Diplomacy'; and (4) to establish and maintain the local political stability that these strategic and economic purposes required.<sup>25</sup>

Marines deployed forces to pursue these objectives in a classic example of a small war.

The Marine Corps experienced sweeping changes during this period. The Corps grew from 3,800 to 13,600 prior to the U.S. involvement in World War I, and the Corps' mission evolved from securing Navy ships to becoming an expeditionary force with the purpose of going

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<sup>24</sup> J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977), 347. Hereafter referenced as Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*; George B. Clark, *Battle History of the United States Marine Corps 1775-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 105, 110, 142-143.

<sup>25</sup> Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 347.



ashore to secure advance naval bases.<sup>26</sup> This mission did not come without professional debate. In 1916, immediately prior to the U.S. commitment of forces to Europe for World War I, the *Marine Corps Gazette* published an article written by Major John H. Russell, a future Marine Corps Commandant. In that article, entitled “A Plea for a Mission and Doctrine,” Major Russell, like many other officers, observed the ongoing war in Europe. He anticipated the eventual U.S. involvement in the war and recognized the Marine Corps lack of preparedness for a high skill combined arms conflict against national militaries. In the article, he explained that generally, the Marine Corps’ role is service with the fleet, but he cautioned against adopting the tasks assigned in times of peace as an organization’s primary mission. When describing peacetime tasks Russell warned, “such an impression is worse than misleading, it is dangerously false, and if allowed to permeate the service would result in its failure to properly prepare itself for the real issue and cause it to fight at an enormous and perhaps decisive disadvantage.”<sup>27</sup> This article, and ones like it, demonstrated that Marines understood the importance of not focusing solely on small wars, and preparing for high skilled combined arms warfighting.

During the years immediately prior to World War I, the U.S. Army also sought to understand its role with respect to the nation’s security. In an effort to improve the Army’s effectiveness, it planned and executed periodic large-scale maneuvers. The Army designed these maneuver exercises after the ones that large European armies conducted and they were meant to increase the overall effectiveness of the force in large-scale wars, a skill the Army thought that it was not prepared for.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Edwin Howard Simmons, *The United States Marines: A History; Third Edition* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 83; Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 397. Hereafter referenced as Simmons, *The United States Marines*.

<sup>27</sup> Major John H. Russell, “A Plea For A Mission And Doctrine,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (June, 1916): 112.

<sup>28</sup> Dennis J. Vetock, *Lessons Learned; A History of US Army Lesson Learning* (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: US Army Military History Institute, 1988) 31-32. Hereafter referenced as Vetock, *Lessons Learned*.

The Army's Field Service Regulations of 1913 and 1914 stated that the role of the Army was primarily in defense of the Nation and not fighting in combat overseas. It explained the rationale behind the organization of the Army and militia as:

whenever the United States is invaded or in danger of invasion from any foreign nation, or of rebellion against the authority of the Government of the United States, or the President is unable with the regular forces at his command to execute the laws of the Union, he may call into the military service of the United States all or any part of the militia organized as a land force.<sup>29</sup>

While the Army's doctrinal manuals understood the role of the Army as fighting the nation's land battles, the lack of recognition of involvement with a conflict overseas indicated the Army's lack of preparation for fighting a European land war. Mark Ethan Grotelueschen summarized the characteristic of the U.S. Army in this period as "not an expeditionary army capable of battle against a major power on foreign soil."<sup>30</sup>

As events unfolded, it did not matter that the Army and Marine Corps were unprepared for a major conflict on foreign soil, they would have to fight in Europe as the U.S. entered the Great War in June of 1917. Prior to this event, the Marine Corps had understood its mission as service in conjunction with the fleet. The Army expected to accomplish its mission primarily in the continental U.S., even though the organization had conducted small wars overseas in Cuba and the Philippines.<sup>31</sup> Both the Army and Marine Corps witnessed the extreme lethality of the war in Europe and set out to better prepare themselves for the reality of high skill combined arms conflict.

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<sup>29</sup> United States Army, *Field Service Regulations 1913; With Corrections to May 21, 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 11; United States Army, *Field Service Regulations 1914; Corrected To April 15, 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 9.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Ethan Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11.

<sup>31</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *History Of The United States Army* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 306-307. Hereafter referenced as Weigley, *History Of The United States Army*.

After the war both prepared for the next larger scale conflict. Dennis Vetock explained that the Army's lessons learned from the war experience caused "the search for improving tactical efficiency to shift from the contemporaneous to the historical approach."<sup>32</sup> The Great War became the basis for the new historical approach. The Army was not going to make the same mistakes that were made in the intense fighting in World War I. The updated version of the *Field Service Regulations* indicated that in 1923 the Army better understood its role in fighting wars because the manual recognized the need to be proficient at overseas expeditionary operations.<sup>33</sup> The Army was no longer a military organization focused only within the borders of the nation.

The period after for World War I was also a period of change for the Marine Corps. Major General John A. Lejeune wrote in his memoirs that upon return from World War I, as the Commandant, he oversaw the reduction of the Marine Corps to peacetime strength and institutionalized expeditionary training in order to improve upon the fighting efficiency of the Corps in the next major conflict.<sup>34</sup> During General Lejeune's tenure as Commandant, beginning in the 1920's, the United States developed a policy that reduced the amount of government spending as a way to become fiscally responsible.<sup>35</sup> General Lejeune understood that the Marine Corps' size made it vulnerable to defense cuts.

Lejeune also "understood that readiness was the hallmark of the Marine Corps," which he envisioned to be amphibious readiness.<sup>36</sup> He saw the fiscal restraints as a real threat to the

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<sup>32</sup> Vetock, *Lessons Learned*, 50.

<sup>33</sup> War Department, *Field Service Regulations 1923* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923) III.

<sup>34</sup> Major General John A. Lejeune, *The Reminiscences Of A Marine* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Dorrance and Company Publishers, 1930), 463. Hereafter referenced as Lejeune, *The Reminiscences Of A Marine*.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 462-463.

<sup>36</sup> Simmons, *The United States Marines*, 110.

existence of the Marine Corps, but by providing the nation with a force in readiness, he could ensure the Corps survival. Lejeune wrote, “so it came about that my major effort during the long period I served as Commandant was directed toward the defense of the Corps.”<sup>37</sup> During this period of defending the Corps, Lejeune’s Marines were involved in small wars throughout the world and simultaneously preparing for other types of military operations. The growth of Marine aviation as an arm of the expeditionary force and the doctrinal developments in amphibious landings were both examples of continued focus on preparing for the entire spectrum of conflict. In 1922, General Lejeune wrote an article for the *Marine Corps Gazette* entitled “Preparation.” In that article, he discussed the importance of preparing for war in times of peace and the importance of Marines succeeding in combat because its institutional existence was at stake.<sup>38</sup>

The development of amphibious doctrine assisted in focusing the Marines in preparing for combat and justifying its own existence. “The Marine Corps was ripe for a new vision of the future. Its leaders were increasingly aware that the Corps’ existence could not long hang on – and was, in fact, even endangered by – heroic performance in World War I.”<sup>39</sup> The mission of defending advance naval bases was already accepted. Lejeune’s vision advanced this acceptance by providing a mobile force to seize advance naval bases. It is important to note that the Marine Corps developed the reinvigorated mission with a new doctrinal publication while at the same time deploying a significant portion of the Marine Corps to small wars missions in the Caribbean and China. The newly developed doctrine was adopted by both the U.S. Army and Navy, and used as the doctrinal foundation for amphibious operations in World War II. During the interwar period, the Marine Corps developed two significant doctrinal publications. The *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* published in 1935 and the *Small Wars Manual* published in 1940. Both

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<sup>37</sup> Lejeune, *The Reminiscences Of A Marine*, 473.

<sup>38</sup> Major General John A. Lejeune, “Preparation,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (March 1922): 53.

<sup>39</sup> Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 461.

provided a framework for conducting operations across the whole spectrum of conflict and demonstrated that the Marine Corps had not always been the small war or irregular war arm of the military.

The Marine Corps' amphibious doctrine was tested and revised during World War II. The Corps' combat reputation first earned in Europe during World War I increased as a result of the successes the Marines enjoyed in the Pacific. Senior leaders continued to advocate for the Marine Corps while the Marines remained in combat operations in the Pacific. In 1943 General Vandegrift responded to the proponents of merging the different services by reiterating the role and attributes of the organization. In addressing combat readiness, he stated to Congress:

Prompt availability for overseas operation and speed of employment therein are characteristics of a Marine Corps integrally a part of its Navy. This applies not only to major warfare but to minor expeditions, such as have frequently occurred in the past. Lives and money were often saved, both to the United States and to the countries assisted, by the prompt availability of a subordinate naval land element.<sup>40</sup>

The conclusion of the first period relating to this work comes with the end of World War II in the Pacific with use of two atomic weapons. That end brought renewed questions as to the utility of the Marine Corps and questions to the roles and missions of the U.S. Army. The second period used to analyze and explain the argument for this paper covers the downsizing of the military immediately following World War II through the downsizing the military experienced after the overwhelming success it enjoyed following the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Throughout this period, the U.S. experienced both small and large wars, but more important to this argument was the preparation of the different military services in anticipation of future conflicts.

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<sup>40</sup> A. A. Vandegrift, *Once A Marine: The Memoirs of General A. A. Vandegrift Commandant of the U.S. Marines in WWII* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 256. Hereafter referenced as Vandegrift, *Once A Marine*.

## Section II: Cold War, Small Wars, Hot Wars - 1946 to 1991

In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. was now a powerful force in the Pacific with the need to secure the nation's interests in this region. General Vandegrift wrote about a balanced Corps after the war. He believed that the Marine Corps did not need to focus on only small wars or only high skill combined arms warfare, but that it should "provide a balanced Fleet Marine Force, including its air support component, for service with the Fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced Naval Bases or for the conduct of such limited land operations as are essential to the prosecution of a Naval campaign."<sup>41</sup> The lack of sustained combat ashore was important to note because it reduced redundancy and mission creep in what was largely believed to be the U.S. Army's role.

The U.S. Army's roles and missions were also in question immediately following the Second World War. The use of atomic weapons at the end of the war and the increased use of airpower perpetuated a notion that land armies would no longer be necessary. This belief would drive inter-service rivalries and stiff competition for limited budgetary resources, but the Army survived with little change to its operating concept.<sup>42</sup> The Army's relevance survived largely because the utility of atomic weapons and airpower in limited wars proved to be small compared to the Army's role in those specific conflicts.

The use of atomic weapons at the end of the Second World War introduced a significant change in the conduct of war. While both the Marine Corps and the U.S. Army had just proven their worth to the nation as forces capable of succeeding in high skill combined arms conflicts, their worth to the nation was questioned in the atomic age. After witnessing the raising of the American flag on top of Mount Suribachi at Iwo Jima, James Forrestal is said to have told the

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<sup>41</sup> Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 657.

<sup>42</sup> Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 266. Hereafter referenced as Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy*.

Commanding General of the Marines ashore “Holland, raising that flag means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years.”<sup>43</sup> Specifically, the Marine Corps had developed a force to succeed in amphibious operations that was professionalized with doctrine, training, and equipment; the kind of operations that characterized the Corps’ World War II experience. In 1946 Robert Heinl observed that the popular belief was the notion that “under atomic attack, the World War II amphibious assault was finished. Normandy (more a ferrying operation than a true oceanic amphibious assault in any case) and Okinawa would never be repeated.”<sup>44</sup> Forrestal’s predictions proved to be incorrect because soon after the war ended the Marine Corps was again fighting for its survival.

This new attack on the Marine Corps’ existence came in the face of recent overwhelming success and therefore strong evidence that the Corps contributed to winning the nation’s wars. It had proven again that it was more than capable of succeeding in high skill combined arms warfighting. The Corps proved themselves not to be an extraneous addition to the U.S. military in a major war, but truly a necessity. The Allied “Europe first” strategy essentially made the Pacific theatre an economy of force mission for the U.S. Army, and thus created a role in for the Marine Corps in that theatre.<sup>45</sup> The use of the Marine Corps within their service specific specialty made it possible for the U.S. to fight in two different theaters. Defenders of the Marine Corps, both serving Marines and politicians, were able to call on this most recent example of proven combat success as a reason the nation wanted and needed the Marine Corps. A service which had a very limited mission, seizure of advanced naval bases and shipboard security, was able to win at the more lethal end of the spectrum of conflict.

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<sup>43</sup> Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot; The Life and Times of James Forrestal* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1992), 199; Robert Debs Heinl, Jr, Colonel, USMC, *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* (Baltimore, MD: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1991), 514. Hereafter referenced as Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*.

<sup>44</sup> Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 513.

<sup>45</sup> Matheny, *Carrying The War To The Enemy*, 203.

In a move to improve the entire U.S. military, an effort was made to merge all the services into one military under one general staff. Under this structure, the Marine Corps would be reduced in both manpower and responsibility. The recommendations made by Army and Navy officers, called for the unification of the services, which for the Marine Corps included the inability to acquire large weapons for combined arms combat, forfeiture of all aircraft to either the Navy or Army Air Force, and limiting the Corps' responsibility for amphibious operations to duties aboard landing craft.<sup>46</sup> The Marine Corps recognized this recommendation as a major step in ending the Corps as a separate service to the nation. The Marines voiced their response to this proposal through the Commandant, General Vandegrift.

In May of 1946, General Vandegrift addressed Congress and cited the long history of combat success and service to the nation as justification for the utility of Marine Corps. He asked for the Corps' future to be determined by Congress and the American people, not self-serving members of rival services.<sup>47</sup> General Vandegrift's success in defeating the unification of the services in 1946 was short lived. Less than one year later, the Marine Corps again fought against merging the services. The intensity of the this attack against the Corps caused Major General Merritt "Red Mike" Edson to retire so that he could fight on the Corps' behalf as a civilian.<sup>48</sup> Another victory for the Corps came with the signing of National Security Act of 1947. This law, reaffirmed among other things that the Marine Corps was a separate service within the Department of Navy and was the only service to have its composition and organization detailed (no less than three Marine Divisions, three Marine Air Wings, and the associated supporting units). It defined the amphibious role of the Marine Corps and gave the Corps representation on

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<sup>46</sup> Gordon W. Keiser, *The US Marine Corps and Defense Unification 1944-47; The Politics of Survival* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982), 50-51; Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 515.

<sup>47</sup> Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 517.

<sup>48</sup> Jon T. Hoffman, *Once a Legend: "Red Mike" Edson of the Marine Raiders* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1994), 377.



the Joint Staff.<sup>49</sup> The Marine Corps can credit its survival following World War II and prior to the Korean War to the success it experienced in combat throughout its history. Had the Marine Corps not proven itself as a force capable of fighting in high skilled combined arms conflict, it would not have been able to justify its existence as a separate fighting force for the nation.

During the same time, between World War II and the Korean War, the U.S. Army faced similar questions about its utility in future conflicts. The development and use of atomic weapons called into question the Army's relevance because of the increasingly popular idea that atomic weapons would be used early in a conflict, preventing the arrival of large ground forces. This view perpetuated the thought that large ground forces were an obsolete notion. The U.S. Army held firm to the belief that even though atomic weapons might be used in a future conflict, the requirement remained for ground forces to occupy a nation that was defeated by atomic weapons.<sup>50</sup> Although the U.S. Army recognized that conflict could happen anywhere in the world and anywhere along the spectrum of conflict, the escalating Cold War focused the Army institutionally toward defeating the Soviets in Europe.<sup>51</sup>

After securing its future, even if only for the moment, the Marine Corps set about improving its war fighting capability to best fit what it envisioned for the future. When faced with the possibility of atomic weapons in future conflicts, the Marine Corps needed to develop a plan to improve its amphibious capability. The ability of a single weapon to produce mass casualties called for increased mobility and greater dispersion of amphibious ships, the landing force, and

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<sup>49</sup> U.S. Congress. National Security Act of 1947, Section 5063; Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 518.

<sup>50</sup> General Omar N. Bradley, "Creating a Sound Military Force," *Military Review* (May 1949): 4; Robert A. Doughty, *Leavenworth Papers; The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76* (Combat Studies Institute, Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington D.C., March 2001), 2-3. Hereafter referenced as Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine*.

<sup>51</sup> John L. Romjue, *American Army Doctrine for the Post-Cold War* (Fort Monroe, Virginia: Military History Office, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1996), 14. Hereafter referenced as Romjue, *American Army Doctrine for the Post-Cold War*.

landing craft. The atomic age brought about the Marine Corps' desire to develop helicopters as a viable option for the dispersed landing of an assault force in an environment where a concentrated force would make targets attractive to an enemy with limited atomic weapons. In 1947, General Vandegrift approved the formation of a Marine experimental helicopter squadron, later designated as HMX-1.<sup>52</sup>

Immediately prior to the U.S. commitment of forces in response to the invasion of South Korea by North Korean communist forces, all branches of the military experienced drastic reductions in funding. The Marine Corps in particular felt harsh budgetary reductions, which added fuel to the notion that the federal government was attempting to overtly disband the Marine Corps. Then Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, served at a time when the most harmful recommendation to the Corps' existence circulated the government. Secretary Johnson recommended in 1948 that by fiscal year 1951 the Marine Corps be reduced to six infantry battalions and twelve flying squadrons for peacetime force strengths.<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that during the height of World War II the Corps grew to six combat divisions. This reduction, had it been enacted, would have been disastrous to the Marine Corps; but the U.S. involvement in the Korean War saved the Corps from further reductions and may have cost the Marine opponent, Louis Johnson, his job as Secretary of Defense.<sup>54</sup>

General Victor Krulak recalled the Marine Corps deployment to Korea as a particularly good example of the Marine Corps; worth to the nation as a separate fighting force. After the unexpected invasion of South Korea, the Department of Defense scrambled to get combat power to the Korean peninsula in order to save South Korea and ultimately stop the spread of

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<sup>52</sup>Michael Gould, "Flying Eggbeaters," *Marine Corps Gazette* (October, 1948): 8.

<sup>53</sup>Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 526.

<sup>54</sup>Victor H. Krulak, Lieutenant General USMC (Ret.), *First To Fight; An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 137. Hereafter referenced as Krulak, *First To Fight*.

communism. The Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMF Pacific) received a query from the Chief of Naval Operations in June 1950 asking when it could provide a reinforced battalion and when it could provide a reinforced regiment. The reply was 48 hours for a battalion and five days for a regiment with a Marine Air Group.<sup>55</sup> When asked how he knew that data, the FMF Pacific Chief of Staff, Colonel Gregon Williams said, “I don’t, but if we can’t, we’re dead.”<sup>56</sup> Within five days, elements of what would become the First Marine Provisional Brigade began embarking on ships.<sup>57</sup>

This understanding of the importance of making every effort to contribute to fighting the nation’s wars drove the expeditionary characteristic of the service and therefore proved itself invaluable to the nation. After the first Marine reinforced regiment arrived in Korea, General MacArthur requested an entire Marine Division, which eventually made an amphibious assault under less than optimal conditions. Again aware of the vital importance to the institutional survivability of the Marine Corps, the Corps piecemealed together the First Marine Division, made up of its own organic units from the Second Marine Division, the reserve force, and the supporting establishment. This unit was sent to Korea, in support of national interests in that region. Without ever having trained together some units went directly from the U.S. and landed at Inchon, a particularly difficult landing beach.

The Marine’s demonstrated “key elements of Corps doctrine and institutional values” while fight in Korea.<sup>58</sup> As a force in readiness, they were able to “piece together the thirty thousand man air-ground force in the space of three weeks” and made the landing at Inchon and

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<sup>55</sup> Lynn Montross and Captain Nicholas A. Canzona, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea 1950-1953: Volume I; The Pusan Perimeter* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Marine Corps, Historical Branch, G-3, 1954), 48.

<sup>56</sup> Krulak, *First To Fight*, 123-124.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>58</sup> Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis; The History of the United States Marine Corps, The Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 482. Hereafter referenced as Millett, *Semper Fidelis*.

fought toward Seoul.<sup>59</sup> The Marines embarked again on ships and made another landing on the east coast of the Korean Peninsula, and fought as far north as the Chosin Reservoir before “fighting in another direction and conducting an amphibious withdrawal.”<sup>60</sup> Throughout the Korean War, the Corps contributed to high skill combined arms conflict.

The U.S. Army’s experience as it relates to preparation for future conflicts shared similarities with the Marine Corps. Like the Marine Corps, the Army experienced significant cuts in its budget which affected all aspects of mission accomplishment. As described previously, the Army’s attempts to provide a relevant force for use in the next anticipated atomic conflict led to a force focused on a threat in Europe. As an organization, the Army still recognized infantry as the dominant force on the battlefield. Although it recognized the utility of armor, it viewed armor units as a supporting arm of the infantry, like any other element of a combined arms force.<sup>61</sup> Even though from the beginning, the Army saw the next war (Korea in this case) as a potential total war with the use of atomic weapons, the conflict was fought as a limited war because atomic weapons were not used. This situation furthered justified the utility of ground forces to the defense of the nation. Following the Korean War, the Army fully immersed itself in its Cold War mission, the defense of Europe from a Soviet invasion. The Korean War proved beneficial to the Army. Faced with the possibility that the U.S. would not use all the firepower in its arsenal, the U.S. Army and its ground forces were “relevant once again.”<sup>62</sup>

Different from the experience with North Korea, the anticipated conflict with the Soviets in Europe projected the use of atomic weapons to be of greater certainty than the reality of their

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<sup>59</sup> Krulak, *First To Fight*, 140; Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 715.

<sup>60</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 493.

<sup>61</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. O’Shaughnessy, “The Evolution of the Armored Force, 1920-1940” (US Army War College Military Studies Program Paper, Carlisle Barracks, 1993), 7.

<sup>62</sup> Walter E. Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine; From the American Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lawrence Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2011): 165. Hereafter referenced as Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*.

exclusion on the Korean peninsula. Under the Eisenhower Administration, experts reduced the size of nuclear weapons allowing for the possibility of tactical nuclear weapons. The professional soldiers who were once confused about the future of their service, now had the technology to adjust doctrine to justify their inclusion on the modern battlefield. The Army's successful argument for the need of ground forces on the atomic battlefield ensured its survival throughout the Cold War.<sup>63</sup>

In comparison to the U.S. Army's mission during the Cold War, the Marine Corps' mission was less focused. After the Korean War, the Marine Corps did not experience a drastic drawdown. The Corps was not only able to permanently station a division and air wing on both the east and west coasts of the U.S., but also to keep a division and wing forward deployed in the Pacific region. Differing from the Army's mission of defeating the Soviets in Europe, the Marine Corps' mission and enemy was unclear. Instead, the Corps improved its reputation as a force in readiness by its demonstrated proficiency in military operations around the globe.<sup>64</sup> Throughout the Cold War, the Marine Corps made landings in both the Mediterranean and Pacific regions in an effort to protect American interests and stem the influence of communism.<sup>65</sup> In addition to combat operations, albeit on the less lethal end of the spectrum of conflict, the Marine Corps became an easily recognizable face of the country as it assumed the missions of securing U.S. embassies throughout the world. As the Corps assumed additional missions, like embassy security, it never focused on only one type of conflict.

The United States involvement in Vietnam brought an opportunity to the Marine Corps, but not one that they had specifically prepared for. Previously the Marine Corps had focused on

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<sup>63</sup> William W. Epley, *The Land Warfare Papers "America's First Cold War Army 1945-1950"* (Arlington Virginia: Association of the United States Army, 1999), 10.

<sup>64</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 518.

<sup>65</sup> Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 594-598. Colonel Heinl details Marine Corps Amphibious missions in support of national interests in China (1955), Vietnam (1955), Formosa (1958), Thailand (1959), Korea (1962), Egypt (1956), and Lebanon (1958).

employing its core competency, amphibious landings, in a wide variety of operations throughout the world. But, unlike the Army who had specifically prepared for a European conflict against the Soviets. When the Marine Corps landed at Da Nang in 1965, they had been preparing to fight in Vietnam as well as other places as explained by General Victor Krulak. He stated “we were indeed preparing for the eventuality of having to fight in Vietnam. Even more important, I told him, we were preparing to fight in a lot of places, too.”<sup>66</sup>

At the beginning of the conflict, the Marine Corps’ mission only included securing the airfield at Da Nang. This mission, as directed by the Commanding General of all U.S. forces in Vietnam, General Westmoreland, and supported by the Vietnamese officer, General Nguyen Chan Thi, negated the counterinsurgency training the Marines completed in preparation for Vietnam. The Marine Corps did not change its organization to meet this new type of conflict.<sup>67</sup> The same mix of Marine air and ground units were deployed to Vietnam with an expected counterinsurgency mission as would have been deployed to any other scenario along the entire spectrum of conflict. Had the Marine Corps delayed any part of the commitment of forces to Vietnam because of miscalculation in the anticipated mission, it would have made it difficult for the Corps to maintain its position as a force in readiness.

In comparison, the U.S. Army’s preparation for the eventual conflict in Vietnam followed a different path. As highlighted previously, the Army anticipated combat on a nuclear battlefield, but by 1956 had started to study and develop units that could fight in both nuclear and non-nuclear battlefields. The 1959 study resulted in the Modern Mobile Army 1965-1970 (MOMAR 1) which envisioned an army with only two types of divisions. Under this concept, divisions

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<sup>66</sup> Krulak, *First To Fight*, 179. General Krulak explains to Daniel Ellsberg’s defense lawyer that the Marine Corps had been preparing to fight not only in Vietnam but also in other places. The lawyer, Leonard Weinglass, was attempting to prove that the Vietnam conflict was premeditated as proven by the actions the Marine Corps took leading to the U.S. entrance into Vietnam.

<sup>67</sup> Lieutenant Colonel H.T. Hayden, “Amphibious Operations During the Second Indochina War: 1965-1973,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (August 2005): 46.

would either be heavy or medium. A heavy division would capitalize on firepower with tanks, artillery, and armored personnel carriers, while a medium division would capitalize on mobility by reducing the structure of the division. Under this organization, its developers believed the U.S. Army would be capable of conducting operations along the spectrum of conflict anywhere in the world. This specialized structure would have limited use in varying terrains throughout the world because of the reliance on armor and infantry personnel carriers. The concept was reworked and in 1965 the Army published the ROAD (Reorganization Objectives Army Division).<sup>68</sup>

Under this concept, all divisions would have a mix of infantry, mechanized infantry, and armored battalions depending on the unit's designation.<sup>69</sup> The ROAD concept also doctrinally allowed the divisions to task organize themselves by attaching and detaching units for specific missions.<sup>70</sup> Robert Doughty argued that prior to the commitment of combat forces in Vietnam in 1965, the U.S. Army was not prepared to fight in a counterinsurgency conflict because of the lack of doctrine, equipment, and organizational structure. The Army's focus on either the nuclear battlefield or high intensity conflict left little organizational emphasis on developing doctrine that dealt with the reality of the less lethal end of the spectrum of conflict, even though senior leaders understood the need to develop doctrine to the point that it could immediately deploy and win in all types of conflict.<sup>71</sup>

Based on the realization that the ROAD doctrine would not ensure success in Vietnam, the Army began developing concepts and organizations better suited for the counterinsurgency

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<sup>68</sup> Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine*, 19.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 21. The author explains that an infantry division normally consisted of eight infantry battalions and two tank battalions; a mechanized division normally consisted of seven mechanized infantry battalions and two tank battalions; and an armor division consisted of six tank battalions and five mechanized infantry battalions.

<sup>70</sup> Weigley, *History Of The United States Army*, 540.

<sup>71</sup> Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76*, 25-26; A.J. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era; The U.S. Army Between Korea and Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1986), 5-63.

conflict in Vietnam. By 1965, the U.S. Army published counterinsurgency doctrine and organized Special Forces units, and organized the 1st Cavalry Division to be employed in combat in conjunction with vertical lift assets.<sup>72</sup> The development of these concepts came as forces were deployed to Vietnam. The Army's experience in Vietnam differed from the Marine Corps because the Corps did not have to develop new doctrine or organizations to optimize its combat performance.

Following the reduction of U.S. forces in Vietnam beginning in 1972, the U.S. Army began a series of organizational changes designed to capitalize on the lessons learned in Vietnam and better prepare the force for its traditional Cold War mission. In the early 1970's, the Army envisioned it would engage in either "a mechanized war in Western Europe or a light infantry war in another part of the world."<sup>73</sup> This belief and the October 1973 war in the Middle East directed the service's efforts in preparation for its next conflict.<sup>74</sup>

The Army's publication of the 1976 edition of *FM 100-5*, attempted to, among other things, expunge the negative Vietnam experience, address the threat to NATO forces in Europe, and address the increased lethality of advanced weapons system.<sup>75</sup> This edition of *FM 100-5* resulted in lively professional debate because it stressed the defense over the offense, emphasized force ratios and the destruction of enemy forces rather than intangible components of combat

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<sup>72</sup> John M. Wright, "The Infantry-Aviation Team," *Army Aviation* (January 1968): 17; Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76*, 26-29; Weigley, *History Of The United States Army*, 542-544.

<sup>73</sup> Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine*, 40.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Colonel Richard M. Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy* (Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1994), 179-181; Major Paul H. Herbert, *Leavenworth Papers, Number 16; Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations* (Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1988), 1. Hereafter referenced as Herbert, *Leavenworth Papers, Number 16*.



power, and focused narrowly on the anticipated conflict in Europe.<sup>76</sup> the publication of an entirely new *FM 100-5* occurred in 1982. It took six years to change the Active Defense doctrine to the AirLand Battle doctrine because General Starry, the new manual's chief proponent, implemented input from across the Army into the new manual.<sup>77</sup> This new concept became known as the AirLand Battle Doctrine and still focused on the more lethal end of the spectrum of conflict.

In April 1980 a disastrous military operation was the impetus for the entire U.S. Military organization to change once again. Desert One, the failed rescue of American hostages, led first the consolidation of Special Forces units under one command and then expanded this concept to the entire U.S. military.<sup>78</sup> Even though the operational mishaps demonstrated the need for joint military reform, the individual services resisted the idea of joint operations, fearing the loss of service autonomy.<sup>79</sup>

As it would happen, the first time the AirLand Battle concept was tested was in the 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada, which was on the less lethal end of the spectrum of conflict than AirLand Battle Doctrine had anticipated. While the invasion of Grenada was not perfect, most of the lessons learned focused on the need for the different services to improve their ability to operate in a joint environment. The Army's 1986 revision of *FM 100-5* did little to balance the Army's focus from high intensity combat to the entire spectrum of conflict, but did coincide with the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Herbert, *Leavenworth Papers, Number 16*, 96; Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 200-204.

<sup>77</sup> John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973 -1982* (Fort Monroe, Virginia: Historical Office, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1984), 65.

<sup>78</sup> Charles G. Cogan, "Desert One and Its Disorders," *The Journal of Military History* (January 2003): 201

<sup>79</sup> James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 31.

<sup>80</sup> Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 435.

Similarly, the Marine Corps experienced internal organizational changes. In the late 1970's and early 1980's the concept of maneuver warfare was gaining traction in the Marine Corps. The idea was the opposite of "firepower-attrition style" warfare or the opposite of what characterized the stalemate experienced in World War I.<sup>81</sup> Bill Lind, John Boyd, and other advocates of maneuver warfare attempted to describe a style of warfare in which a numerically and materially inferior force could defeat a superior force. Therefore the goal was not to defeat the enemy through destruction, but to defeat the enemy by disrupting his decision making cycle.<sup>82</sup> Maneuver Warfare, as envisioned by Bill Lind, advocated the reduction of lethality of the force by reducing the amount of lethal combat systems in order to increase the maneuverability of the force.<sup>83</sup> The Marine Corps officially adopted maneuver warfare in its doctrine in 1989 with the publication of *FMFM-1 Warfighting*. As early as 1982, Marines identified that the adoption of the maneuver warfare could also include significant organizational changes to the infantry and its supporting units.<sup>84</sup>

Under pre-maneuver warfare doctrine, all Marine Corps infantry battalions mirrored each other. Colonel Bruce Brown argued that maneuver warfare could lead the Marine Corps to adopt three different infantry battalion organizations, questioning the utility of the infantry battalion across the spectrum of conflict.<sup>85</sup> The foot-mobile infantry, who cannot be "encumbered with organic weapon systems," is the fastest tactical Marine unit, and therefore the most attractive

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<sup>81</sup> William S. Lind, "Defining Maneuver Warfare for the Marine Corps," *Marine Corps Gazette* (March 1980): 55.

<sup>82</sup> United States Marine Corps, *MCDP 1: Warfighting* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 26.

<sup>83</sup> William S. Lind, "Misconceptions of Maneuver Warfare", *Marine Corps Gazette* (January 1988): 16.

<sup>84</sup> Colonel Bruce G. Brown, USMC (Ret), "Maneuver Warfare Roadmap; Part I Trends and Implications," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (April 1982): 46-47.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., Colonel Brown details that infantry battalions in maneuver warfare doctrine could be either a heavy mechanized combined arms task force, a light armored task force, or foot-mobile infantry.

to maneuver warfare.<sup>86</sup> The reduction of heavy organic weapons in the infantry battalion makes that infantry unit less effective against a heavily equipped adversary, and potentially reduces its effectiveness in high skilled combined arms warfighting. In addition to the changes in the infantry battalion, Bill Lind recommended the following changes:

- 1) Replace 155mm howitzers with 105mm or heavy mortars
- 2) Replace M1A1 tanks with an improved M60 tanks or LAVs
- 3) Eliminate tilt-rotor or helicopter air assault platforms
- 4) Replace fixed wing platforms with an improved A-10 type platform.<sup>87</sup>

These recommendations would have resulted in a less capable organization and an unbalanced force.

Regardless of the critics of maneuver warfare, the Marine Corps used the concept in its preparations leading up to the U.S. involvement in the Gulf War in 1991. The test of the Marine Corps' maneuver warfare doctrine did not include the foot-mobile light infantry envisioned by Colonel Brown and Bill Lind. Had the Marine Corps deployed a truly light division according to Lind's description, it would have resembled the U.S. Army's 82d Division and had much less of a chance of success in stopping an Iraqi attack on Saudi Arabia.<sup>88</sup> This lack of capability would have delivered fewer options to the nation and questioned the utility of the Corps as a separate military service.

This period ended with both the Marine Corps and U.S. Army having quickly defeating an enemy in high skill combined arms warfighting during the Gulf War. Throughout this period both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps engaged in combat and operations across the spectrum of conflict. The threat to the Marine Corps' existence and Army's role within the U.S. military existed at the beginning of this period. To the Army the issue of the relevance of a large land

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>87</sup> William S. Lind, "The Next Agenda: Military Reform Part I", *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1988): 50-51.

<sup>88</sup> James A. Warren, *American Spartans; The U.S. Marines: A Combat History from Iwo Jima to Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 303. Hereafter referenced as Warren, *American Spartans*.

army after the invention of atomic weapons meant the real possibility of questioning the Army as a dominant force in the American armed forces..

### **Section III: Combined Arms War and Generational War - 1992 to 2012**

The end of DESERT STORM did not immediately present a threat to either's existence similar to the threat that both faced at the end of World War II. With the Cold War won, the challenge became planning for the next war. The fact that the "end of the Cold War had not brought a halcyon age of peace and culture" brought ramifications to the U.S. military.<sup>89</sup> Some would argue that the fall of the Soviet Union actually made the world a less stable place, and perpetuated more uncertainty for U.S. security. During this period both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps experienced significant reductions in force. This strain on resources meant that each service would have to prioritize the type of missions for which they wanted to prepare.

The Marine Corps still maintained the maneuver warfare doctrine developed and introduced during the leadership of the former Commandant, General Al Gray. James Warren observed that "since the early 1990's, the Marines and other American military services have been engaged in a delicate balancing act, adapting doctrines and training regimens to meet the pressing requirements of operations other than war while attempting to maintain the capability to fight major regional wars against regularly constituted armies."<sup>90</sup> This statement explained briefly the value the military, and especially the Marine Corps, placed on preparing for operations across the entire spectrum of conflict. Warren provided supporting empirical evidence detailing the reduction of forces from 2.17 million personnel in 1987, to 1.4 million in 1998; but the number

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 316; United States Department of Defense, *JP 3-07: Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995), GL-3. Joint doctrine previously defined military operations other than war as the use of military capabilities across the range of military operations short of war. These military actions can be applied to complement any combination of the other instruments of national power and occur before, during, and after war.

and duration of deployments outside the borders during that period increased. He stated that the Marines had conducted most of those deployments.<sup>91</sup>

At the beginning of the chronological events in this chapter, both the Marine Corps and the Army were tasked with conducting military operations in war torn Somalia. The Marines would be first and then would be replaced by the Army in 1993. The Marines were assigned two specified tasks of “(1) providing security for humanitarian relief sectors (HRSs) located in Bardera, Baidoa, and Mogadishu, and (2) providing escort security for food relief to those HRSs throughout south central Somalia.”<sup>92</sup> These two tasks characterized this operation as a classic small war, and one that it did not change its organization or doctrine for. After both services left, the Marine Corps would report that some of the difficulties in the civilian saturated areas came from the lack of intelligence with respect to the population. The Marines did not complain of having incorrectly organized or equipped for the operation.

Likewise, the U.S. Army faced similar challenges when attempting to prioritize its preparation for combat. Previously, the Army had argued that its organizational priority was to win the Cold War in the event that violence erupted between the Soviet Union and the U.S. in Europe. Regardless of the fact that institutionally the Army attempted to prepare for the global application of its forces across the spectrum of conflict, it still focused on Central Europe. All this changed at the end of the Cold War. Walter Kretchik made a similar observation when explaining the evolution of Army doctrine, “now, with the Soviet Union gone, service leaders searched for a credible national security threat and a doctrine to defeat it.”<sup>93</sup> Kretchik further explained that during this period the Army’s institutional leadership began to realize that it would need to focus doctrine on securing national interests in a world with “partially-developed democratic

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<sup>91</sup> Warren, *American Spartans*, 316.

<sup>92</sup> LtCol John M. Taylor, “Somalia: More Than Meets the Eye,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1993): 75.

<sup>93</sup> Kretchik, *U.S Army Doctrine*, 221.

institutions and emerging free markets.”<sup>94</sup> This was a departure for the first time since 1949, when Army doctrine focused on defeating the Soviet Union in Europe. General Franks, the TRADOC Commander in 1991, envisioned a doctrine that would better project the Army’s forces globally, believing that the previous doctrine worked well for the Cold War but needed improvement when faced with an uncertain enemy.<sup>95</sup>

During the 1990’s, the writers of the new doctrine received mixed reviews about how the Army should change. Most of the criticism came from the idea of the Army focusing on something other than major combat operations.<sup>96</sup> The new doctrinal manual, *FM 100-5 Operations 1993*, was a natural evolution of its predecessors, but added emphasis on versatility which directed the Army to understand that it may be asked to do something besides fight major combat operations. The 1993 version of *FM 100-5* was tested two times in the first half of the 1990’s. It was tested in Haiti in 1994 and Bosnia in 1995. Kretchik stated that in both of those operations the Army resisted changing the long ingrained Cold War characteristics and did not embrace that there was a place for anything less than major combat operations as a task for the Army. There was another shift in Army service doctrine in 1997 which attempted to resolve professional debate on the meaning of war and operations other than war. Following this, the doctrine was tested again; this time in Kosovo.

By the time the Army’s conventional ground forces entered Kosovo in May 1999, the Army was still operating under the 1993 version of *FM 100-5*. Despite its negative criticisms, the Army validated this version of the doctrine’s change in focus. It had projected combat power on a

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<sup>94</sup> Kretchik, *U.S Army Doctrine*, 221.

<sup>95</sup> Romjue, *American Army Doctrine for the Post-Cold War*, 21; Kretchik, *U.S Army Doctrine*, 222-223.

<sup>96</sup> Kretchik, *U.S Army Doctrine*, 224-226; United States Army, *FM 100-5, Operations*, (Washington DC, Government Printing Office, 1993), 1-1. 1991-1993 highlights changes in doctrine focused on major combat operations to Operations Other Than War.

global scale and executed combined arms warfare in operations other than war.<sup>97</sup> When the Army wrote and published the 2001 version of *FM 3-0 Operations*, it was meant “to be a transitional doctrine, Its intent was to reorganize the service from a Cold War ‘heavy or legacy’ force dominated by mechanization to an ‘interim force’ containing both mechanization and more modernized forces by 2007.”<sup>98</sup> The modernization of the force depended on technology that did not yet exist.<sup>99</sup> This doctrine was expected to last until the Army was fully modernized, which was estimated to be complete in 2010.<sup>100</sup> This doctrine introduced the Army to the concept of full spectrum operations, which described the ability to conduct operations across the spectrum of conflict. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 occurred shortly after the release of this manual and played a significant role across the spectrum of conflict. Because of those attacks the service would find itself near simultaneously fighting in high skilled combined arms conflict and small wars.

The Marine Corps did not experience any doctrinal shift during this same period. James Warren explained, “the Marine Corps has a long and admirable tradition of anticipating emerging threats on the horizon and adapting to them effectively.”<sup>101</sup> This statement did not imply that the Marines’ attempt to predict the next enemy they will have to fight with a level of certainty, but that they have attempted to possess doctrine that remains flexible enough to allow them to succeed in a variety of missions.

During this period, the Marine Corps participated in operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Both of those operations were a combination of high skilled combined arms

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<sup>97</sup> Kretchik, *U.S Army Doctrine*, 246-247.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>99</sup> John Sloan Brown, *Kevlar Legions; The Transformation of the U.S. Army, 1989-2005* (Washington D.C.: United States Army, Center of Military History), 197.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Warren, *American Spartans*, 327.

conflicts and operations on the less lethal end of the spectrum of conflict. Again, Marines proved their ability to contribute to missions other than amphibious operations. “More than 60,000 Marines deployed from the United States to battle positions in Kuwait in 45 days.”<sup>102</sup> Upon commencement of the attack into Iraq the Marines under Lieutenant General Conway’s leadership supported the Army’s V Corps in high skilled combined arms warfighting.<sup>103</sup> The relatively short amount of time it took U.S. and Coalition forces to defeat the Iraqi military might have misled some professionals as to the purpose of the Marine Corps. Most Marines left Iraq in May 2003 after coalition forces successfully defeated the Iraqi military, only to return and take part in the stabilizing Iraq beginning in January 2004.<sup>104</sup> Marines along with the Army participated in the long occupation of Iraq, leading some to argue that this mission was outside of the core tasks of the Marine Corps. The Marines had again served as a balanced general purpose organization alongside the Army, regardless of the duration of the conflict.

These U.S. Army and Marine examples illustrated through a historical framework that the Army and Marine experience in combat has allowed the Corps to survive and the Army to adapt. The lack of extreme failure in combat on the part of either service has provided this argument without any recent evidence of what could happen if either service does not correctly prepare for the next conflict. To explain the possibility of what could happen if either service does not correctly prepare for the next conflict, this thesis will consider the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.

In May of 2000, after what can be described as a success for the Israeli Defense Forces, Israel withdrew from its most recent invasion of Lebanon. This set the conditions for a continuation of the conflict. For the next six years, Hezbollah planned for the next phase in the

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<sup>102</sup> Joseph R. Chenelly, “OIF Generals Discuss War,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (October 2003): 40.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ross W. Simpson, “Fixing It, Not Breaking It,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (March 2004): 14.



war with little interference from the Lebanese government. This preparation included the arrangement of high-tech rockets and other military materiel normally reserved for nation states. Israel spent the next six years changing their doctrine to effects based and systems based construct that relied on precision weapons from its air force attacking critical nodes that would lead to systems collapse and Israeli victory. Along with this change in doctrine, Israel reduced the size of its ground forces. On July 12, 2006, a small force of Hezbollah fighters crossed the border and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. This event set in motion the application of Israel's new doctrine. The situation did not unfold as Israel predicted and this led to the use of a greater amount of ground forces than anticipated. Prior to the cease fire on August 14, Hezbollah had fought the Israeli defense force to a point that the senior Israeli leaders felt defeated. In 2008 Israel was able to respond proving they were able to adjust their military's institutional thinking and therefore achieve a greater level of success.<sup>105</sup> The implications for the defeat in 2006 could have been much greater. At a minimum, what was at question after the loss in 2006, was how the Israeli Defense Force would be as a deterrent to a credible near peer threat.

## Conclusion

This monograph began by explaining the dangers faced by a military organization if it plans for the future by concentrating on the previous war. The historian, Michael Howard, briefly detailed both British and French examples, in which military failures were directly linked to an organization's focus on a previous experience instead of concentrating on the possibility of a changing environment.<sup>106</sup> However, our national and military leaders ignore Howard's warning as they concentrate on the next war by focusing on the previous conflict. For the purpose of this

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<sup>105</sup> Matt M. Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008); Russell W. Glenn, *Glory Restored? The Implications of the 2008-2009 Gaza War in Times of Extended Conflict* (Study by U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Irregular Warfare Center, 2010).

<sup>106</sup> Howard, *The Causes of Wars: And Other Essays*, 195.

monograph, the Marine Corps has focused on later phases of operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM and therefore allowed those experiences to shape military focus for the future.

On January 5, 2012, President Obama and the senior civilian and military leaders from the Department of Defense delivered new strategic guidance for the defense of the nation. In those comments the President, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff highlighted the importance to the nation's security that the military succeed in any type of conflict. The comments further explained the growing importance of protecting U.S. interests throughout the Pacific and the Middle East.<sup>107</sup> Both the Pacific and Middle East encompass potential adversaries, which a conflict would be characterized by high skill combined arms warfare. Because of the current national economic situation, the President and assembled leaders declared the impending reduction of the nation's military.<sup>108</sup> According to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff it is now too expensive for the nation to maintain a military similar to a force that succeeded in two separate conflicts in the past decade, but fiscally feasible to invest in technology, the cyber domain, and special operations.<sup>109</sup>

Anticipating the strategic guidance from the nation's leadership, the Marine Corps also focused its efforts in areas other than high skill combined arms warfighting, as evidenced by the Marine Corps Commandant's guidance.<sup>110</sup> This guidance changed what has characterized the Marine Corps as a balanced force.

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<sup>107</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President on the Defense Strategic Review, January 5, 2012," The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/05/remarks-president-defense-strategic-review> [accessed February 1, 2012].

<sup>108</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), "Defense Strategic Guidance Briefing from the Pentagon, January 5, 2012," U.S. Department of Defense, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4953> [accessed February 1, 2012].

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> *Marine Corps Operating Concepts 2010*, 129; *Commandant's Planning Guidance 2010*, 8-9.

According to Howard, attempting to make predictions has proven to be the incorrect approach in the past. There is not a nation or military, including the U.S. Marine Corps, which knows with absolute certainty what the next conflict will include because warfare is essentially unpredictable. Focusing on small wars and irregular warfare may prove to be correct, but it may also prove to be the incorrect decision on the part of the organization. Evan Montgomery presented scenarios from across that spectrum of conflict that would challenge the U.S. military in plausible future conflicts. Montgomery stated:

it appears increasingly clear that the United States will confront a very diverse and demanding array of strategic challenges over the coming decades: transnational terrorist groups, weak and failed states, and the intersection between them; the rise of a near-peer competitor that is not yet overtly hostile toward the United States but has nonetheless implemented a comprehensive military modernization program devoted to countering the US military ability to project power; and the proliferation of nuclear weapons to aggressive regimes and perhaps eventually non-state actors.<sup>111</sup>

If future conflicts will be diverse, then it is difficult to justify specializing in a certain type of conflict. This broad characterization of the future national security problems does little to center military professionals in focusing their organizations' preparation for the next adversary, but highlights the possibility that conflicts may arise between the U.S. and other established militaries at the higher end of the spectrum of conflict. This possibility further emphasizes the need for the Marine Corps to be prepared to succeed in conflicts other than small wars and irregular warfare. This monograph relied on the Corps combat experiences across the spectrum of conflict for a period of one hundred years as justification for a balanced general purpose organization.

In similar fashion, Dakota Wood stated the U.S. must be prepared to face three strategic challenges in the next 20 years. Of those three challenges, two caution against potential conflicts at the more lethal end of the spectrum of conflict. Those two challenges are "hedging against the

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<sup>111</sup> Evan Braden Montgomery, *Defense Planning for the Long Haul; Scenarios, Operational Concepts, and the Future Security Environment* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), v.

rise of a hostile or a more openly confrontational China and the potential challenge posed by authoritarian capitalist states and preparing for a world in which there are more nuclear-armed regional powers.”<sup>112</sup> The new Marine Corps’ new directed focus on small wars will potentially leave the Marine Corps incapable of contributing, let alone succeeding, in a high skilled combined arms conflict with a confrontational China or a nuclear equipped regional power. Wood listed the third challenge as “defeating both Sunni Salafi-Takriri and Shia Khomeinist brands of violent Islamist radicalism.”<sup>113</sup> While this challenge might resemble the conflict of the past decade in Iraq and Afghanistan, it may potentially be much more lethal, as evidenced by Israel’s experience in Lebanon in 2006.

This work argued that the Marine Corps’ proposed focus on small wars and irregular warfare is incorrect because it will lead to a future organization that is manned, equipped, and trained to fight irregular warfare similar to the stability operations phase of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. This direction will only enable the operations that occurred after the fall of Baghdad and the Taliban and not high skill combined arms conflict. This shift in focus will diminish the overall effectiveness to the nation as a balanced force capable of fighting and succeeding across the entire spectrum of conflict. To further explain this argument, it is important to understand the potential future conflicts in which the U.S. may find itself engaged.

In an attempt to remain balanced and relevant, the Marine Corps decided to focus its efforts on small or irregular wars, as stated earlier. However, this attempt to remain relevant has actually recommended the unbalancing of the force. Throughout its existence, the Corps has always attempted to remain balanced and relevant as evidenced in the three periods covered in this monograph. The details outlined in the three periods expand on the fact that a balanced

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<sup>112</sup> Dakota L. Wood, *The U.S. Marine Corps; Fleet Marine Forces for the 21st Century* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008) 29.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Marine Corps is the only option to remaining relevant to the nation. It may currently be unimaginable to America that the nation would do without the Corps. Previous senior Marine leaders understood the dangers to the organization's existence and saved the Corps only by proving that the Marines were capable of succeeding in any mission they were assigned, not just the tasks they focused on. Only by maximizing the utility of the organization to the nation did the past leaders ensure the Corps' survival. In many instances, those leaders saved the Corps from absorption into other services by proving the value in having an organization capable of succeeding in combat regardless of the style of warfighting. Current leaders cannot forget that the Corps' worth to the nation is characterized by being a truly flexible force in readiness, not a specialized force that is focused on certain areas along the spectrum of conflict.

## **Recommendation**

One of the challenges in maintaining a robust military that is capable of combat across the entire spectrum of conflict is the fiscal strain it puts on a nation. Thomas Donnelly and Frederick Kagan explained that nations are more apt to prepare for the most likely predicted future conflict because of the expense of a truly well rounded ground force capable of uncompromised success across the spectrum of conflict. Donnelly and Kagan also highlighted the dismal record throughout history when nations attempted to predict and prepare accordingly for a specific type of conflict. More often than not, the nations which focused on specific types of conflicts were left unprepared.<sup>114</sup> For the near future, the most likely conflicts according to the proposed Marine Corps plan of organization and doctrine will be those characterized as irregular in nature. Following Donnelly and Kagan's logic, the Marine Corps believes that it cannot afford (fiscally) to maintain a force truly balanced in readiness. It would be more important to the Corps

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<sup>114</sup> Thomas Donnelly and Frederick W. Kagan, *Ground Truth; The Future of U.S. Land Power*, 33-35.

to remain relevant by balancing the force in a way similar to its construct throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

AirSea Battle as a concept for inclusion in future military doctrine is an idea that is gaining traction among military professionals. Andrew Krepinevich specifically explained the need to defend U.S. interests against China and Iran. He cited that both China and Iran's future capability with anti-access technology will limit the ability of the U.S. to project power in those regions at a level that protects national interests. If the current power projection capability does not advance, the U.S. military may not be able to accomplish the strategic guidance which the nation's senior leadership delivered in January 2012. This guidance specifically detailed the importance of the Middle East and the Pacific with respect to national interests. As this concept is currently articulated, it pertains only to the Air Force and Navy and does not envision ground forces.<sup>115</sup> A change to the concept could include recognizing the importance of advanced bases, which may include a mission for ground forces, especially the Marine Corps as they have historically seized and secured such bases.

This monograph argued that the U.S. Marine Corps' recent focus on irregular and small wars limits the Corps' service to the nation because this concept will lead to a future organization manned, equipped, and trained to fight irregular warfare in the manner of the past decade. This focus on a particular style of warfare diminishes the overall utility as the nation's force in readiness, which ultimately reduces the need for the Marine Corps as a separate warfighting institution of the nation. This focus on the less lethal area of the spectrum of conflict is a departure from what has characterized the Marine Corps' success since the early twentieth century.

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<sup>115</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle?* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), 1.

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